

# FAITH MATTERS: setting a table for faith

*Supporting parents as they go about the awesome task of nurturing the spirits of their children*

## Evangelizing Ourselves So We Can Evangelize Our Children



e·van·gel·ize ( ǐ -v ǎ n ' j ə -l ī z ' )

1. to advocate a cause with the object of making converts
2. to bring important information to those in need of the information

*“Parents tell me continuously that they do not give their children any religious training, from the feeling that it is taking unfair advantage of the child. They say, ‘I propose to let my children grow up as far as possible unbiased.’ But, if you do not bias your children, the first one that they meet on the street, or in school, or among their companions, will begin the work of biasing, of the impression of education, for this is a continuous process. Whether you will it or not, it is something over which you have no choice. It is something that will be done either wisely and well—or unwisely and ill.”*  
— *The Rev. Minot-Judson Savage, 19th Century Unitarian Minister*

I started working at First Unitarian in early November of 1995. The first official piece of correspondence I received from anyone at the church was a note of welcome from the president of the Board of Trustees. In the envelope he included a copy of an article that had just been published in the November/December 1995 issue of the UU World magazine entitled, “Evangelizing Our Children.” I read that

article with great interest and excitement. In the article Rev. Tony Larsen encouraged parents to tell their children what they believe, listen to the beliefs of their children, tell the children why they belong to a UU congregation AND tell the kids that they hope they will choose to stay in Unitarian Universalism.

In the 1995 November/December UU World article, Rev. Larsen went on to list 7 things that he believes we should teach our children in Unitarian Universalist churches. As I recently re-read and then lead a discussion on that article, I realized that over the years I have used Rev. Larsen's main points to fashion the religious education program of First Unitarian. I share those 7 points with you later on in the pages of this magazine.

Since parents are the primary religious educators of their children, it is vital that parents understand about Unitarian Universalism too. I don't know about you but I find it difficult to really teach someone to do something I don't know how to do myself. This issue of *Faith Matters* contains information to help parents understand the

important things they need to know to deepen their faith as Unitarian Universalists and then to teach their children about Unitarian Universalism.

As always, I value your feedback on this issue of *Faith Matters* and I hope to see you in church soon.

Peace Be With You,

*Cheryl*

*At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.*

*Albert Schweitzer*

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UU TRIVIA QUIZ answers  
(1) C (2) B (3) C (4) A (5) D

## 7 Things We Should Be Teaching Our Children based on the work of Rev. Tony Larsen

### 1. **We should teach our children to pronounce our name.**

Yes, Unitarian Universalism is a long name but our kids need to know that that is the name of our denomination. I recently heard a parent tell me that when someone asked her child what religion they were the child said they were vegetarians.

### 2. **We should teach our children an answer to the question: "What do Unitarian Universalists believe?"**

As Unitarian Universalists we understand that this may be the wrong question to ask someone who is a UU because we have no creed or standard set of beliefs. Never-the-less, this question is what people always want an answer to. Most of us also realize that the answer: "we can believe whatever we want"

is not only not a good answer but it is not true. It is important to teach your children a simple sentence or two that captures what Unitarian Universalism is to use as a starting point. As they grow, they can change their statement to match their deepening faith. It may work for your family to choose a quote from a famous UU that captures the essence of your belief. I have included a few suggestions for memorization on page 3.

### 3. **We should teach our children to defend their beliefs.**

This means teaching our children how to decide what they believe and how to explain it to others. A good way to help children verbalize these beliefs is to talk with them often about why they believe the way they do and about what you believe and how you came to that belief. This gives them practice at defending their beliefs. If your child wants you to help her come up with some things to say to a classmate who keeps bugging her about the "fact" that she is going to hell for not believing, then role play the situation with



her to help her come up with some responses that reflect her values and yet are respectful of her friend's beliefs.

### 4. **We should learn more about UU history**

and teach it to our children. That way when someone says they have never heard of Unitarian Universalism your child can say, "Well, maybe you have heard of Ralph Waldo Emerson or Beatrix Potter or Paul Newman."

### 5. **Learn about the Bible and teach Bible stories to your children.**

Our culture is Judeo-Christian and we need to know about the Bible to be culturally literate. There are some excellent moral tales in the Bible and by not knowing the stories, your children are missing out good sources of wisdom.

### 6. **Teach your children about "world religions" beyond the Judeo-Christian tradition.**

Our culture is becoming more and more diverse and having a basic understanding of what it means to be Jewish or a Muslim is helpful as we interact with our fellow travelers on planet earth. It also helps us see the connections and the similarities between all of us and not just the differences.

### 7. **We should teach our children ethics.**

What are the qualities to cultivate to be a human of good character? Most UUs do not believe that a belief in God is necessary in order to have good moral character. If God doesn't instill good character in us, where do we get it?

"If your child learns about world religions, then when your child's friend tells her that Jesus was born of a virgin, she can answer that lots of religions say that same thing about their founders such as Lao-tse, who was the founder of Taoism."

***We are Unitarian  
Universalists. We are the  
church of the flaming  
chalice. We are the church  
of the open mind. We are  
the church of the loving  
heart. We are the church of  
the helping hands.***

"Unitarian Universalism is not a rock to hold onto. It is a river to swim in. If you want a specific set of beliefs to hold onto, you will probably be disappointed in Unitarian Universalism. Unitarian Universalism is about learning to swim in the river of life rather than climbing out of it onto a rock."  
-Rev. Doug Kraft

"If you accept that God created everything, you have to accept that she created a universe with a great deal of diversity, with many, many ways of getting the same job done. I can look out my window and see literally hundreds of species of plants, dozens of species of birds, at night you can see big stars, little stars, and so on. Would it make sense then, that that same God would turn around and say, "you can only know me this one way, you must worship with only these sets of words, you must do things this way and no other?"

— Bluejay Adametz

**"All religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree. Never lose a holy curiosity"**  
— Albert Einstein

"We all flow from one fountain. All are expressions of one Love."  
—John Muir

## Choosing a BELIEF STATEMENT....

**Heaven's here on earth  
in our faith in humankind  
in our respect for what is  
earthly  
in our faltering  
belief  
in Peace, Love,  
and Understanding  
—Tracy Chapman**

"Love is the doctrine of our church, the quest of Truth is its sacrament, and Service is its prayer."

- L. Griswold Williams

This is the mission of our faith:  
to teach the fragile art of hospitality;

To revere both the critical mind and the generous heart;

The prove that diversity need not mean divisiveness;

And to witness to all that we must hold the whole world in our hands."  
William F. Schulz



***"We need not  
think alike to  
love alike."***

—Francis David

***As UUs, we covenant to affirm  
and promote:***

*The inherent worth and dignity of every person;  
Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;  
Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;  
A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;  
The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;  
The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;  
and Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.*



**"Love is the spirit  
of this church,  
and service its law.  
This is our great  
covenant:  
To dwell together  
in peace,  
To seek the truth  
in love,  
And to help one**

**Ours is a religion which, like  
sunshine, goes everywhere;**

**Its temple, all space;**

**Its shrine, the good heart;**

**Its creed, all truth;**

**Its ritual, works of love;**

**Its profession of faith,  
divine living.**

—Theodore Parker

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## Where did the name Unitarian Universalist come from, anyway??

Both Unitarianism and Universalism have roots in liberal Christianity. Historically, Unitarianism referred to the monotheistic belief in the single personhood of God and a rejection of the Christian Trinity; Universalism taught that all souls would achieve salvation and rejected everlasting Hell. Both the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church in America existed as separate entities until 1961 when the two merged to become the Unitarian Universalist Association of congregations (UUA). The UUA is headquartered at 25 Beacon Street in Boston, Massachusetts. William Ellery Channing was one of American Unitarianism's leading theologians and Hosea Ballou is known as "the father of American Universalism." These are the roots of Unitarian Universalism. However, contemporary Unitarian Universalists do not necessarily subscribe to these historic beliefs of Unitarianism and Universalism.

## UU TRIVIA QUIZ

(answers are on page 1)

### 1. What Christian belief was the Unitarian faith a reaction to?

- A. The Ascension of Jesus
- B. The virgin birth of Jesus
- C. The Trinity

### 2. King John Sigismund was the first and only Unitarian king. Where was his kingdom?

- A. Holland
- B. Transylvania
- C. Poland

### 3. What did Universalists believe?

- A. All people are good
- B. All people are saints
- C. All people are saved

### 4. In 1863 the first female Universalist minister was ordained. What was her name?

- A. Olympia Brown
- B. Molly Pitcher
- C. Edith Quails

### 5. Which of these people is not/was not a UU?

- A. Frank Lloyd Wright
- B. Kurt Vonnegut
- C. Paul Newman
- D. Henry Kissinger